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HOME ECONOMICS EXTENSION WORK

C. B. Smith



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Extension Service C.W. WARBURTON *Director*
Office of Cooperative Extension Work C.B. SMITH *Chief*
Washington, D.C.

Home management &
work

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics

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HOME ECONOMICS EXTENSION WORK*

By C. B. Smith
Chief, Office of Cooperative Extension Work
U. S. Department of Agriculture

Before presenting the content of this paper, may I extend to all who may be present my greeting and the sincere regret that unforeseen developments prevent me from carrying out my anticipated plan of attending the meeting and presenting this paper in person.

Surely no professional organization has objectives which are more fundamental to human well-being than has the American Home Economics Association, and equally certain it is that at this particular time no phase of the work of this great organization is of more vital importance than that of this group whose concern is with developing high standards and desirable conditions of rural home and community life. Therefore, I wish to extend my best wishes and the hope that these days of deliberation may make rich contribution to the service of which each of you has dedicated your professional effort.

In presenting the topic, "Home Economics Extension Work," I wish first of all to assure you that home demonstration work has the strong support of the Federal office, and that our earnest thought and effort are being directed toward promoting immediate expansion and further development of home demonstration work. We believe in home demonstration work. The most precious thing in America is the American home. I look upon the farm homes of the country as the very source and cradle of the continuing strength and virility of the Nation. The maintenance of high ideals and a high standard of living in the farm home is the essence of our extension work, and we are proud of the fine group of pioneer women in the extension service who have and who now are devoting their best energies and thought to developing high standards in this new and challenging field of education for farm women and girls.

We are proud of their achievements to date in making farm home life and rural community life richer and finer and we look for even greater accomplishments in the future.

Man works that he may have a home, a house to live in, gardens and grounds, a wife and children, an abiding place where the heart is.

*Address presented before the Extension Section of the American Home Economics Association, Boston, Mass., July 3, 1929.

DISTRIBUTION: One copy of this circular has been sent to each extension director, State and assistant State home demonstration leader, county and assistant county home demonstration agent, home economics specialist, State agricultural college library, and State experiment station library.

Home is where the farmer spends more than 90 per cent of his days. It is the finest and sweetest thing he gets out of life. How satisfying is a home of peace and orderliness, beauty and comfort, culture and grace. They are great citizens who build happy homes, more to be envied than kings and queens.

Home building is not an effort of man alone. He clears the forest, builds the house, grows the food, and furnishes other raw materials, but the wife and mother largely makes the home as he makes the farm.

Home building represents a process of specialization - a division of labor. Just as the man and boy of the farm profit by the wise counsel from time to time on crops and stock and markets and other matters of the farm, so, also, do the woman and girl in the farm home profit and build a better home by counsel with those who have made a study of matters affecting the home.

Experience has shown that there is no contentment on the farm unless there is contentment in the home. We may increase the income of the farm to the utmost limits, but unless it results in a satisfying home we have made little advance. How valuable, then, is our extension work in home economics which gives counsel on matters of the home!

This, then, we would set up as the first objective of home-economics extension to build homes, primarily rural homes, in the open country, such homes as children leave with regret and long to return to, and which men are willing to defend with their lives. And homes are built, not only out of material things but even more largely out of spiritual things - harmony, justice, sense of right and wrong, forbearance, comradeship, love, godliness, hospitality, generosity, beauty, neighborliness, and all the finer things of life. It is desired that the heaven that "lies about us in our infancy" shall be extended through extension work to include our whole life.

Making a home involves more intangibles than doubling yields or income. We have to accept the fact that improving the home is a more refined and difficult task than improving the farm. The results of effort in home building are not so easily measured as are results in farm building, but it is probable that they are even more important. There is more privacy about the home than there is about the farm. It is more difficult to get into, more difficult to make comment on. It requires more tact to deal with farm women and girls about the home than to deal with the men and boys about the farm.

Our studies show that less than one in three farm homes report contact with home-economics extension workers, but that more than two out of three farms report contact with agricultural workers.

We set it down, then, as an objective in extension work to reach and influence for the better not 32 per cent of farm homes but a minimum of 90 farm homes out of each 100.

It is an objective in home-economics extension work to have at least one home demonstration agent in every rural county having as many as 500 farm families and to have about one administrative supervisor to each 15 to 20 counties. The supervisors should help the home demonstration agent to develop sound county and community home-economics extension programs, based on the actual needs of the county as revealed by surveys and study, and strengthen her arm in carrying them out; and they should show how as well as tell how. It is believed we have had too much of school methods and too little of fact-finding work in our county home-economics programs. More and more our programs must be based on ascertained facts regarding county and community needs.

It is an objective in home-economics extension to support the home demonstration agents in the counties through the help of home-economics extension specialists in such fields as foods and nutrition, clothing, home management, child care and parental education, household furnishings, health, at the rate of about one extension specialist in each field to each 15 to 30 counties in the State.

We also believe it should be an objective in every State to pay the entire salary of every home demonstration agent from college and Federal funds and, where this is not possible, to contribute at least as much from college and Federal sources toward the salary of the home demonstration agent in each county as is contributed from these same sources toward the salary of the agricultural agent in the county. We would be inclined to interpret it as fair and just if even more funds from college and Federal sources were put into the home demonstration agents' salary than into the county agricultural agents' salary, because of the greater difficulty of procuring and maintaining a competent staff in the home-economics field.

It should be an objective in home-economics extension to cooperate with agricultural agents in developing farm and home extension programs that establish desirable standards of living, and to devise methods of obtaining a farm income to maintain such standards.

This is a big thing that has come actively into home-economics extension recently - setting up desirable standards of living, ascertaining the factors that enter into such standards, estimating the cost of each, seeing what it totals up, then readjusting the farm to bring in a large enough income to pay for the standards of living thus set up. What do we want in the way of purchased food and of clothes for different occasions? What expenditures are necessary for good teeth, sound tonsils, a sleeping porch, education of the children, music in the home, reading matter, insurance against old age, recreation, contributions to church and charity?

It is peculiarly the objective of home-economics extension to work out these standards with groups of farm women and men, and with individuals, and then to help them to find ways of reaching such standards through adult and junior programs of work. Nothing bigger has come out of extension in 10 years than the idea of agents and government, farm agent and home agent, sitting down with groups of farming people and working out standards of farm living and the making of such adjustments in farming as will bring in a farm income that will make the desired standards of living

possible. And it is peculiarly the function of the home demonstration agent and home-economics specialists to take the lead in this field. In this work we have a matter of profound interest to all farm women and older girls, and it is stimulating to note the excellent beginnings in this field.

May we explain further what we mean by higher standards of living? It is not proposed that the farm family shall live extravagantly, but that they shall live well. The group that best preserves family tradition and family life, the group that furnishes the blood that rejuvenates our cities and towns, is entitled to a standard of living that compares favorably with the standard of any like group anywhere.

It is an objective in home-economics extension to have good, well-balanced meals in every farm home, with vegetables, fruits, milk, meat, and eggs, and flowers on the table, all in due proportion. It means health to the family, clear complexions, abounding life, contentment, and of outstanding importance, also, a good table means hospitality. Whoever sets a good table welcomes the friend or stranger to dinner. Visitors to dinner tone up the whole family. Our best manners are displayed, conversation develops, out of conversation come new ideas, and new ideas spell progress on the farm and in the home. The family is mentally and socially stimulated. Hospitality extended brings hospitality in return, and so the family is invited out. They go and see and learn. Much importance should be attached to the well-laid, well-planned table. It means so many things, in addition to mere food and drink.

Around the table the family assembles three times a day. There thanks to the Creator are offered up. It is the social period when the whole family is together. There comment is made by father and mother on this event and that. Around the table, character in the family is developed and guided, ambition stimulated, plans made. The good farm table and congeniality, to which are attracted the school teacher, farm and home extension agents, the merchant, the banker, the friend, the stranger, mean success to any farm family wise enough to adopt it and live up to its possibilities.

An automobile for business and pleasure is an essential of a satisfactory farm life. A radio that keeps the farm family in touch with the Federal Department of Agriculture and State agricultural college, with the news of the world, with the best musicians and music, and with speakers and educators is an essential of a modern farm home. Magazines and books, daily papers, and technical journals are essentials of any home. Running water in the home, electricity, and furnaces must be a part of the farm home as they are a part of the urban home.

Recreation must be a part of farm life. A visit to the college for Farm and Home Week, and to the county and State fair occasionally, travel into adjoining States and sections, a week at camp now and then, are all legitimate aspirations of the farm family, and are more and more to be indulged in. These things are put into the minds of the farm family by home economics agents, and ways of meeting the expenses involved are worked out by county men and women extension agents and specialists with

the farm family. The farm family must spend more to have more and it is the privilege and duty of extension workers to help them in both these fields.

It is an objective in home-economics extension to promote a satisfactory social life for adults and girls and boys in the farm home and rural community. Activities that will promote sociability - picnics, community singing, pageants, plays, old home weeks, family gatherings - may all be suggested and stimulated by home-economics extension agents, and happiness and contentment in rural life be greatly augmented thereby.

It is an objective in home-economics extension work that farm folk should be well and becomingly dressed. People can not be at their best and have an independent attitude of mind unless they are becomingly dressed. Extension instruction regarding line and color, fabrics, and fashions, by home economics agents are real contributions in this field, and essentials in rural extension work.

Help to rural parents in child rearing and training is an objective in home-economics extension. We are not numerically strong yet in this field, but we are seeing it as a basic need, and in a few States have entered this field of helpful service. We are helping the farm mother and father to a knowledge of the child mind at various stages of development, child habits at different ages, and the nutrition and growth of the child, so it may be normal in mind and body.

In addition, we have the responsibility of developing able, far-seeing, altruistic leadership among farm women. What an admirable record the home demonstration staff already have to their credit in this most important field in extension work.

Yes, we have a real job in the home-economics extension field - none bigger. We know where we want to go. We have clear-cut objectives. Our biggest task now is so to organize our system and our teaching as to reach a larger percentage of the farm women in each rural community. We can not be content with dealing only with farm women who are members of the county extension organization or who attend our study groups. We must go beyond these limited numbers and reach the masses. Our home demonstration agents need to see that contact is made with farm women who do not attend clubs and meetings or belong to extension groups. If we can not get into the home through organized group work, we must send out messages through the press, the circular letter, give them at the community picnics, or some other gathering.

Home-economics extension is using but half the publicity that agricultural extension is using. Our studies have shown conclusively that contact of the public with our extension agents is one of the greatest stimulants to the adoption of practices recommended by the agents.

A woman agent in every county, more basic studies of rural conditions and needs, a broad program of home and community well-being, the further development of independent, open-minded, far-seeing, altruistic leadership among farm women and girls, increased effort to bring them

into definitely organized groups, greater endeavor to reach beyond the organized extension groups, and more home-economics publicity, are all objectives which are essential in home-economics extension if we are to meet the needs of rural women and girls. We know better what to do than we know how to do.

If we get farm women and girls solidly behind our work, we must reach them in larger numbers. We hold the interest of those with whom we come in contact. We must meet more of them.

Put important things first, that is the important and difficult thing. It is the challenge I would leave you. A woman agent in every county, supported by strong extension specialists in every essential field, and, finally, appropriate standards of living set up for every community and household, standards high enough and valuable enough to be worth struggling to attain. Such are our goals, and we accomplish most when we set up goals toward which to work.

It is evident that home demonstration work is entering an era of expansion. Let us endeavor to be ready to meet its opportunities and its responsibilities, for farm women and girls are earnestly looking for capable leadership in this field of education.

